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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LJUBLJANA 000212

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [EUN](#) [SI](#)
SUBJECT: SLOVENIA: SCENESETTER FOR THE VISIT OF THE
PRESIDENT

Classified By: CDA Maryruth Coleman for reasons 1.4 (b,d)

11. (C) Summary: Your visit to Slovenia for the U.S.-EU Summit provides an excellent opportunity to acknowledge the remarkable progress made in this small but dynamic country since your visit in 2001. Over the past seven years, Slovenia's own accomplishments reflect progress to a Europe that is whole and free. Since 2001, Slovenia has joined NATO and the EU. Slovenia now holds the Presidency of the EU Council, the first of the new EU member states and the first ex-Communist country to do so, and finds itself center stage in European and global affairs. Strong logistical skills and effective consensus building have resulted in a successful EU Presidency thus far, with Kosovo independence and significant progress on EU enlargement in the Balkans as key accomplishments. The U.S.-EU Summit will be the only EU Summit to take place in Slovenia and the government is very keen on ensuring that the Summit and your visit are a success. End Summary.

A Strong Bilateral Partner

12. (C) Your visit will kick off with bilateral meetings with President Danilo Turk and Prime Minister Janez Jansa. While Jansa has been in office since 2004 and will face a tough election this fall, Turk only took office in December 2007. Although the opposition supports Turk, relations between the government and the President are relatively positive and constructive. We recommend that you applaud the strong leadership PM Jansa and Slovenia have demonstrated during its presidency of the EU Council and express appreciation for the successful efforts that Slovenia has made to strengthen U.S.-EU relations.

13. (C) Slovenia is also a strong bilateral partner for the U.S. Despite having a relatively small military, Slovenia has made significant contributions to the global war on terror and to peacekeeping operations in the region and beyond. The Slovenian Armed Forces have played a substantial role in NATO operations in Kosovo, deploying up to nearly nine percent of its active forces to KFOR at times. Slovenia has deployed nearly one percent of its deployable forces to Afghanistan and has made donations of weapons and equipment. In addition, Slovenia provides two trainers to the NATO Training Mission in Iraq and has donated significant funds, weapons and equipment there as well. We suggest that you express gratitude for Slovenia's continued presence in all NATO operations and encourage Slovenia to contribute more in support of the NATO Training Mission in Iraq. It would also be very helpful if you could suggest that the government consider sending a full training team to the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan.

14. (C) The only outstanding bilateral issue between the U.S. and Slovenia remains the unresolved status of property belonging to Americans that was nationalized by the former

communist Yugoslav government during and after WWII. Although the current government has resolved 88% of all American claims, approximately 100 Americans, most of whom are quite elderly, are still awaiting restitution. Additionally, Slovenia has yet to resolve the issue of restitution of Jewish communal and heirless properties that were also confiscated or nationalized during and after WWII. Although there are no American citizens involved, we have been using our good offices to quietly broker a resolution to the Jewish restitution impasse. If raised, please encourage the government to facilitate the speedy resolution of these lingering issues.

A Regional Leader

15. (C) Slovenia is a strong proponent for enlarging transatlantic and European institutions eastwards and into the Balkans. During its Presidency of the EU Council, Slovenia has contributed to an accelerated pace of enlargement in the region, with great progress being made towards bringing Croatia, Turkey, and Serbia into the Union. Slovenia strongly supported inviting all of the Adriatic Three countries to join NATO and extending MAP to Georgia and Ukraine. We suggest that you encourage Slovenia to continue to play a strong role in the region beyond the conclusion of its EU Presidency.

Domestic Politics Heat Up

16. (C) Slovenia's current domestic political climate is

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heating up in advance of the September 21 parliamentary elections which, like past elections, are expected to be free and fair. Prime Minister Jansa is hoping to capitalize on the success of Slovenia's EU Presidency to strengthen the position of his center-right party, the Slovene Democrats (SDS). Jansa views your visit and the U.S.-EU Summit as a keystone of Slovenia's EU Presidency. While the opposition has agreed not to play a spoiler role during the EU Presidency, pre-election posturing has already begun. Polls show SDS and the leading opposition party, the center-left Social Democrats, to be neck and neck.

Economics Cool Down

17. (C) The economic situation in Slovenia is a bit cooler than its politics. Although Slovenia has enjoyed significant growth since independence, the economy is beginning to show strains and the country is currently experiencing the highest rate of inflation within the euro zone, which it joined in January 2007. Despite assurances by the current government to open the country up to more foreign direct investment, foreign businesses find it difficult to crack into the Slovenian market. It would be useful for you to stress that we hope to see increased investment opportunities for U.S. firms in Slovenia.

A New Ambassador

18. (C) Ambassador Yousif Ghafari, a Michigan businessman, and his wife, Mara Kalnins-Ghafari, will arrive in Slovenia on May 25. Deputy Chief of Mission Maryruth Coleman has served as Charg d'Affaires for the past nine months. The entire Mission is looking forward to your visit.
COLEMAN